THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Government have seen the reported remarks of General Pervez Musharraf which contain his misconceptions about India's approach towards Pakistan and on the alleged reasons for Pakistan's need for a new naval base. These remarks reflect Pakistan's compulsive hostility towards India.

Government remain committed to building trust and confidence, putting into place a stable structure of cooperation and addressing all outstanding issues with Pakistan in accordance with the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration. We expect Pakistan to demonstrate its adherence to these agreements by abandoning its sponsorship of crossborder terrorism and stopping its hostile propaganda against India.

Tripartite talks on India-Iran Gas Pipeline

538. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any proposal from Pakistan for holding tripartite talks with itself, India and Iran to evolve a political understanding on the proposed Iran-India gas pipeline;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what is the Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMER PANJA): (a) No, Sir,

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Refugees from Sri Lanka

539. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM:
SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a flood of refugees from Sri Lanka had started crossing into India, following the capture of Jaffna by LTTE;

(b) if so, the number of refugees who have so far come down to India and where they have been settled; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to help resolve the ethnic issues with respect to Sri Lanka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Between April 2000, when the LTTE took control of the Elephant Pass at the entry to the Jaffna peninsula, and early July 2000, 743 refugees have entered India from Sri Lanka, according to available figures. Most of the refugees have been accommodated in camps in Tamil Nadu.

(c) The Government of India has consistently adhered to a policy involving a three-fold commitment:

(a) to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka;

(b) to the restoration of lasting peace in Sri Lanka;

(c) to a peaceful, political process being the only means of achieving a lasting peace, through a negotiated settlement which would meet the aspirations of all communities.

India's policy was conveyed to the Sri Lankan Government and other political parties during the visit of the minister of External Affairs to Colombo on June 11-12-2000. India could play a helpful role only if all sides ask it to do so.

Indo-China bilateral relations

540. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are taking steps to improve Indo-China bilateral relations;

(b) whether Indo-China high level talks were held for the purpose;

(c) if so, the various issued discussed there;

(d) the steps taken to resolve the Indo-China bilateral problems; and